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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Monday, October 23, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "PRODUCTS OF AMERICAN FORESTS." Information from the Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Joyce Kilmer has touched us all with his feeling for the sheer beauty of a tree. But owners of private forests and those who manage our national and state forests also look on trees as important national resources. And so, I've been talking to some of the forest products specialists of the Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

These men remind us, first, that forest resources have money value. Lumber alone, used in the building industries, is worth at least 300 million dollars a year. But forests yield many products other than lumber, and they give employment both directly and indirectly to about 6 million persons. Then, too, forests absorb rainfall, prevent erosion, shelter wildlife, and provide recreation for hundreds of thousands of people.

Of course the primary product of the forests is wood. Wood for building houses, wood for bridges, railway ties, telephone and telegraph poles, fence posts, piling, mine timbers, and fuel.

Most of us still use wooden furniture. Furniture makers use both solid and veneer woods. In making certain pieces, like a grand piano, they need veneer for the curved parts of the instrument. In other furniture, they use veneer surfaces of costly woods on less expensive woods, not only to lower cost, but to obtain beauties of grain and figure impossible to get in solid wood. Veneer isn't new. The murals of an old Egyptian tomb show veneer makers at their work 3500 years ago.

Plywood is another way of using wood, to increase strength and decrease cost. And plywood is being put to new uses. Plywood is made of several thin layers of wood glued together. The grain of the wood runs in a different direction for each layer, so that plywood is very strong. Research in the Forest Products Laboratory has resulted in the use of plywood beams and arches, also plywood parts for prefabricated houses. More than a million square feet of plywood adorn the interior surface of the steamship Queen Mary.

Another wood product is wood flour. That's sawdust ground to a fineness approaching wheat flour. As yet, we Americans haven't found it necessary to put wood flour in our bread. We use about half the wood flour output for making linoleum. About a fourth of the wood flour is combined with other converted wood products to make plastics and molded articles. Another fourth is used for filler in making dynamite. Maybe some of the dynamite is used to get out the stumps left when the trees were cut to make the wood flour!

Again, science has shown the way to get the cellulose fiber of wood by means of chemicals, and then to convert the cellulose fiber into paper or rayon and cellophane. That idea of making paper from wood pulp was probably suggested by the common wasp, which makes its nest of finely chewed wood.

We not only use the wood, but we use the sap in the wood. The pine trees of the southern forests do not even have to be cut down to yield their turpentine and resin worth 40 to 50 million dollars a year. These raw materials are still called "naval stores" as they were in the days of wooden sailing vessels, when the builder of the ship had to have pitch and tar from pines to calk his boat and lubricate its ropes.

Another tree-sap,- that of the sugar maple,- returns several million dollars a year to the farmers of Vermont, New York, and Ohio, whose wooded lands boast "sugar bushes" or maple groves. Incidentally, 32 gallons of sap boils down to just one gallon of standard sirup, and that gallon of sirup, when evaporated,

yields only 7 and one-half pounds of sugar. Another point about maple sirup: Did you know that some 6 to 8 million pounds of it never meet a pancake or a waffle? The darker grades of maple sirup are sold to the tobacco industry for flavoring pipe, cigarette, and chewing tobacco!

I can barely skim over some of the other bits I discovered about our forest resources. Blossoms of forest trees furnish bees with nectar for their honey. Bark, leaves and other parts of forest trees and shrubs supply tannin for making leather, dyes for textiles, plant ingredients for medicines. And our foresters estimate that about 10 million dollars' worth of wild nuts, picked up from the ground every fall, find their way into commercial channels. That's aside from the large quantities gathered for eating at home. And they don't count acorns, although the acorns hogs eat are converted to meat for our tables.

Finally, we draw on the woodlands for our holiday decorations. There's a two million dollar business in Christmas trees, holly and other greenery, and bayberry wax for holiday candles. These decorative outlets for forest-grown plant materials are a permanent source of income to a number of people. So, all in all, we get more out of the woods than we often realize, and if you're good at arithmetic, you can add it all up and arrive at the official figure of about 3 and a half billion dollars- the money value of our forest resources.

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